



Maricopa County Animal Care & Control

Preventing Problem Barking

A dog barks because he's trying to tell you something. If he's left alone outside, one of the more common reasons for barking, he's probably saying, "I'm bored and lonely." Or if your dog isn't getting enough exercise, he's probably barking to tell you that he is frustrated and anxious.

To prevent barking, it is important to take care of your dog's emotional and physical needs. Make sure that your dog has enough to do. Maricopa Animal Care & Control recommends interactive play and walks to help your problem barker keep calm and relaxed, and thus less inclined to bark. If he starts howling the minute you leave, give him his favorite chew toy to help keep him occupied. You can also try leaving the stereo, radio or television on at a normal level. This can mask outside noises that would otherwise send your pet into a barking fit.

Is your dog spayed or neutered? The desire to mate can lead to frustrated barking-another good reason to make that appointment to have your pet neutered if you haven't already.

When your dog is barking, try the following techniques to encourage him to stop.

Shaker Can

To tell your dog that barking offends your ears, you can respond by offending his ears with a shaker can. Begin by making several shakers, which are empty aluminum cans with eight pennies inside, with the openings taped shut. Then place them in strategic spots around the house, so you can correct him quickly; the faster the correction, the more effective it is.

When problem barking occurs, grab the shaker can and say, "Quiet." If he does not quiet immediately, enforce the command by shaking the can once. If he quiets, follow with praise and petting. If not, shake the can again. If he still barks, toss the can at his feet, being careful not to hit him. It may take several tries and several days to succeed, so be persistent. Try the shaker can method if your dog barks whenever he's left alone. Exit your house as if you were leaving for the day, and, once outside, listen for

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Material from Wisconsin Humane Society and American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.



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barking. If he barks, rattle the shaker can outside the door. What you're trying to do is teach him that barking brings no response. Praise him when he is quiet, then re-enter the house and try it again. Repeat this regularly. If you have patience, this exercise can really pay off.

Bitter Apple

Offending his sensitive sense of taste will tell your dog you don't like the barking. Begin by saying, "Quiet!" when he barks inappropriately. If that fails, Bitter Apple, available at most pet supply stores, can be squirted on his gum line. A small amount is safe, but avoid squirting it down his throat. Repeat both if necessary. Then praise him when he quiets.

Ignore Your Dog

If your dog is barking to get your attention, the best solution is to walk away from him and ignore the bad behavior. Praise him and lavish attention on him after he has quieted down for a couple of minutes. He will learn that barking gets him nothing, while silence gets results!

Other Methods and Tools

You may need to explore all of the methods mentioned here before finding one that works for your dog. If you're not seeing results after two to four weeks, try something different. For example, you might want to consider a citronella bark control collar. Citronella bark control collars work by spraying

citronella (an unpleasant, startling smell for dogs) in the air whenever your dog barks. Most dogs quickly associate barking with the unwanted correction and train themselves to stop barking. If you need extra assistance, consult a pet behaviorist or professional trainer.

Techniques to Avoid

Maricopa County Animal Care & Control does not recommend the use of anti-bark "shock" collars or "debarking" as methods to control barking. Debarking surgery removes a fold of tissue from each side of the dog's larynx. In order for the dog to make a barking sound, this tissue must tighten and vibrate. After the surgery, dogs have only a whispery bark. Besides the fact that this operation is inhumane, some or all of the dog's bark usually comes back within a few months. Anti-barking shock collars are also considered cruel and ineffective by many professionals in the animal welfare and veterinary community. It is difficult to tell if the collar is working, or how much it hurts your dog. Plus, recent university studies found citronella bark collars to be twice as effective as anti-barking shock collars.